

DAILY BEAST

Go Inside the Original Gilded Age Mansions



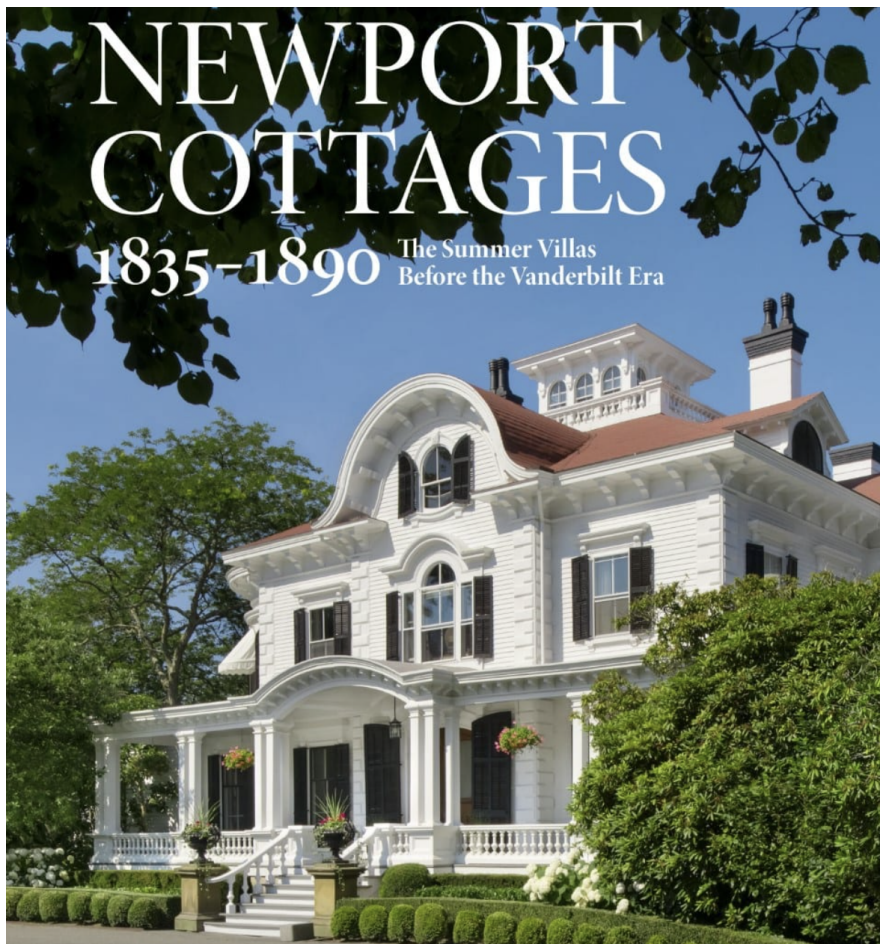
Before the titans of Beaux-Arts architecture built palaces for robber barons, plenty of mansions of ingenuity and beauty lined Newport's streets.

The Daily Beast

Published Apr. 20, 2023 12:28PM ET

Y

ou can't really blame them for it, the thousands of tourists who flock to Newport, Rhode Island to gawk solely at the great turn-of-the-century stone palaces. In fact, it might be a blessing for the visitor with a keen eye and a more curious soul, as the real treasures of Newport, the houses that make it *the* city for understanding pre-modern American domestic architecture, are overlooked. *Newport Cottages 1835-1890: The Summer Villas Before the Vanderbilt Era*, a gorgeous new book from historian Michael C. Kathrens, is a beautiful companion for those discerning visitors to Newport. It's also the latest selection for our series on gorgeous new travel-related coffee table books, Just Booked.



Of course, these days one doesn't have to be a visitor to Newport to appreciate its houses. They're a central part of the hit HBO show *The Gilded Age*. In the new book, published by Bauer & Dean, the best of the houses from Newport ascendancy are given star treatment. The red-brick Tuscan-style villa of Edward King, built in the 18040s, is shown in its proper glory—a status it's not often afforded these days given its use as a senior center. The original plans for Mrs. Astor's Beechwood, now owned by Larry Ellison, are showcased. So, too, are the ornate masterworks in wood—houses like the William Watts Sherman House, Woodbine Cottage, Chastellux, and Ochre Point.

Kathrens makes leading men (back then they were all men) out of the architects who once designed for the mighty but are often overlooked today. In these pages, George Champlin Mason Sr., Richard Upjohn, Peabody & Stearns, and Dudley Newton are given their due. The charm of Champlin's work, in particular, stands out. But the book also has an emotional secret weapon. Many of the houses selected no longer stand. Readers will no doubt lament the fates of jaw-dropping homes like Linden Gate, the Reef, or Rockhurst.